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CENTRE ISSUES NORMS FOR ONLINE CLASSES BY SCHOOLS

The Union HRD ministry on Tuesday recommended a cap on duration and the number of daily sessions for students

MAX 30 MIN FOR PRE-PRIMARY STUDENTS

In its set of guidelines called 'Pragyata', the ministry has recommended that the duration of online classes for pre-primary students should not be for more than 30 minutes. For classes 1-8, a maximum of two online sessions of up to 45 minutes each can be held, while for classes 9-12, four sessions of 30-45 minutes duration each have been recommended

CONCERNS ABOUT HIGH SCREEN TIME

- The main emphasis of Pragyata is on balanced online and offline activities, keeping the screen time as an essential parameter in accordance with the level of students
- The ministry framed the norms after parents raised concerns about students' protracted exposure to mobile/computer screens

240 mn

STUDENTS HAVE BEEN IMPACTED BY CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS, SAYS MINISTRY

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Thorny issues block EMI moratorium extension

ANURADHA SHUKLA @New Delhi

THE Centre is in favour of extending the moratorium on term loan EMIs beyond August 31, but an announcement will be made only after the legal and technical issues are fixed.

"RBI has to sort out two things — one-time restructuring of loans and the legal response to the Supreme Court on whether banks can charge 'interest on interest'. Only when these two issues are fixed, will an extension be announced," said a senior official from the Finance Ministry.

As the current moratorium will end in August, banks will have to declare many loans as non-performing assets in their second quarter result, else they will fall short of minimum capital requirement.

Fitch Ratings estimates that under a moderate stress scenario, PSU banks will need at least $15 billion to meet Tier-1 norms. Which means the banks will require immediate recapitalisation.

Restructuring will take away that burden to a great extent, but RBI will have to define the terms for restructuring before the current moratorium ends.

Another issue is that many businesses have moved court over denial of moratorium and also over the interest charged during the relief period. Recently, the Karnataka High Court ruled that banks cannot deny moratorium to businesses whose survival is at stake.

"Courts can ask RBI to enforce moratorium. Courts can also ask banks not to sit over borrowers' request for moratorium," said Veena Sivaramakrishnan, partner, Shardul Amarchand Mangaldas & Co.

But the situation is tricky as the SC is looking at the legality of 'interest on interest' (EMI already includes interest, so charging interest for moratorium period will be interest on interest). However, if this is waived, it will dent banks' profitability. So, extending the moratorium without charging interest will be challenging for the Finance Ministry.

'Interest on interest'

Last month, the Supreme Court said there is "no merit in charging interest on interest" for deferred EMIs during the moratorium period. The matter will again come up for hearing in the first week of August

Truth can be rattled, not defeated... My heartfelt thanks and gratitude to all those who have come out in my support today

Sachin Pilot, who was dropped as Dy CM

Gehlot pushes out co-Pilot to crush Rajasthan revolt

Sachin also sacked as the state party unit president, loyalists too axed

RAJESH ASNANI & RICHA SHARMA @ Jaipur/New Delhi

THE Congress on Tuesday sought to crush the Rajasthan rebellion by sacking Deputy Chief Minister Sachin Pilot and his two loyalist ministers from the Gehlot ministry, buoyed as it was by the chief minister showing his strength at the Congress Legislative Party meeting the previous day.

Apart from Pilot, Vishwendra Singh and Ramesh Meena were axed from the ministry. Ashok Gehlot later conveyed to Governor Kalraj Mishra in writing, seeking his approval.

Pilot was also sacked as the state Congress unit president. In his place, Govind Singh Dotasara was appointed state PCC chief.

However, the drama is not fully over as the Pilot camp as well as the BJP asked Gehlot to prove his strength on the floor of the Assembly. The buzz in Jaipur is that Gehlot is confident about his numbers and might want to take a floor test in a few days. And Pilot is expected to speak his mind on Wednesday.

The axe fell after the second CLP meeting in as many days, which was boycotted by the Pilot camp. The meeting adopted a resolution authorising action against the rebels, who are holed up at a resort in Gurugram. The CLP meeting was held at the Fairmount resort where all of them were shepherded to by Gehlot.

Party spokesperson Randeep Singh Surjewala later announced the big punitive action. He said Pilot was ensnared by the BJP into working to bring down the Congress government although he was given a lot of respect and key posts all through his career in the party.

Party sources said the high command decided to take firm action after Pilot ignored repeated communication to join the CLP meeting and discuss his grievances there. "Pilot was not ready to yield and Gehlot was on firm ground as he enjoyed support of most of the MLAs. Even the party's top leadership was against hard bargaining with Pilot. All efforts to find a middle ground failed," said a senior party leader.

"Both Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka were in touch with him, but he decided to push his rivalry with Gehlot too far without accepting that he does not enjoy majority support to validate his claim for the CM's post," said another party leader.

After meeting the Governor, Gehlot charged that Pilot had been working with the BJP for the past six months to topple his government. "Pilot and his group are simply obeying whatever the BJP is dictating to them. The resort where they are staying has been organised and managed by the BJP and those people who are experts in toppling governments are controlling the entire game at the resort."

Meanwhile, Pilot and his loyalist MLAs continue to stay in Gurugram. A video clip from his camp appeared to show they had 16 MLAs.

Later, the Maharashtra unit of the Congress suspended former spokesperson Sanjay Jha, who had already been dropped from his post. The action was taken for 'anti-party activities and breach of discipline'. P9

The numbers game

In the 200-member Rajasthan Assembly, the Congress has 107 MLAs and the BJP 72. An estimated 102 MLAs, including allies, attended the CLP meeting called by Gehlot on Monday. Among the Congress allies in RS polls, the Bharatiya Tribal Party with two MLAs decided to stay neutral in the floor test

Two girls share top rank in PU science

Prerana M N, Science topper

Abhijna Rao, Science topper

T C S Aravind Srivatsa, Commerce topper

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @Bengaluru

THE state has recorded a marginal increase in the Pre-University Course II pass percentage at 61.80 per cent, against last year's 61.73 per cent. A total of 67,52,777 students cleared the examinations this year, the results of which were announced on Tuesday.

Shockingly, not even a single student has passed in 88 colleges, but the number is down from last year's 98 colleges. Of these, five are government colleges, up from last year's three; and five aided colleges against just one last year. The number of private unaided colleges with nil results has dropped from 94 last year to 78 this year. Primary and Secondary Education Minister S Suresh Kumar said the performance drop will be analysed on a college-by-college basis.

Prerana M N from Vidyamandir INDP PU College, Malleswaram, Bengaluru, and Abhijna Rao from Vidyodaya PU College, Udupi, share the first rank with scores tied at 596 in science. T C S Aravind Srivatsa, also from Vidyamandir INDP PU College, secured 598 to top in commerce. P7

EXPRESS READ

WPI inflation dips 1.8% in June on low fuel prices

New Delhi: The prices in the wholesale market fell for the third straight month, declining 1.81% in June, due to a decline in fuel and power items, even as food items were costly. Inflation in May and April was (-) 3.21% and (-) 1.57%, respectively. P12

India, China military commanders hold talks

New Delhi: Indian and Chinese military commanders on Tuesday held over 10-hour-long intense negotiations on the next phase of troop retreat. Sources said Depsang and disengagement of troops from both sides from Finger4 was discussed

KR Market opened for only 16 days in 4 months; farmers, vendors in distress

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @Bengaluru

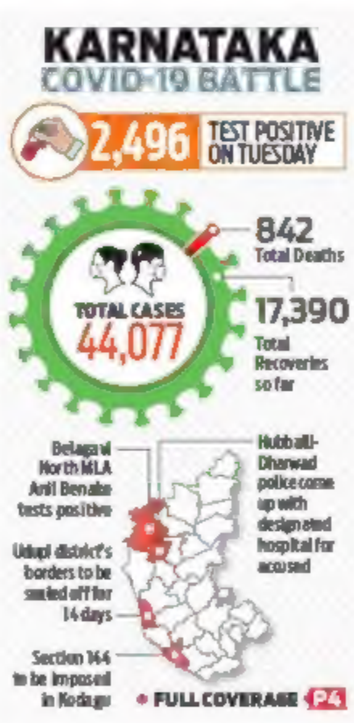
THE iconic Krishna Rajendra Market in the city, which is Asia's largest market for vegetables, fruits and flowers with daily business of about Rs 2 crore, was open for just 16 days since March this year. With another week-long lockdown starting Wednesday, thousands of farmers from several places around the state capital and vendors from across Bengaluru, who depend on the market to sell and buy produce, have been badly hit.

Ever since the nationwide lockdown was announced in March, like all other commercial places, KR Market too was shut. There was an attempt by the civic authorities to shift the market and vendors were told to have their trade at National College Grounds and later at APS Ground, but arrangements were chaotic. And with the Covid-19 spread, nothing was done to help the traders.

An otherwise bustling KR Market wears a deserted look in Bengaluru on Tuesday

After the Union Ministry of Home Affairs announced relaxation in lockdown norms, the State Government allowed KR Market to reopen on June 6. But when number of Covid-19 cases started rising sharply, Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa, after an emergency meeting, decided to seal down marketplaces in Bengaluru including Kalasipalya, KR Market, Chamarajpet and Chickpet till June 31. This was later extended for some more days.

Speaking to *The New Indian Express*, Diwakar, president of KR Market Vendors' Association, said there are over 2,000 vendors in KR Market premises who sell fruits, vegetables, flowers, greens and even puja items along with other essentials. P2


KARNATAKA
COVID-19 BATTLE
2,496 TEST POSITIVE ON TUESDAY
TOTAL CASES 44,077
842 Total Deaths
17,390 Total Recoveries so far
Belagavi North MLA Anil Benake tests positive
Udupi district's borders to be sealed off for 14 days
Section 144 to be imposed in Kodagu
Hubballi-Dharwad police come up with design and hospital for accused
FULL COVERAGE P4

LIFE & LIVELIHOOD

Unnao returnees struggling to earn

Anuj Kumar (L) at his village work site

Despite Mumbai being a costly city, I saved enough to send it home. But here, I can barely support myself

Anuj Kumar, now a daily wage labourer

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

THEIR numbers are maddening — more than 32 lakh — and their stories as repetitive as their existence in the persistent Covid-19 virulence. Lockdowns forced them back to their villages in Uttar Pradesh, where their sustenance is in question and their anxieties about better livelihood are growing by the day.

Many have already started their journey back: Trains to Mumbai and Gujarat from Gorakhpur and Lucknow are running full and ads for cheap and direct bus services from east UP towns have started popping up on Facebook.

For its part, the government has skill-mapped most of them. More than 10 lakh migrant workers have been absorbed in the rural jobs scheme, MGNREGS. Besides, the government has signed pacts with various industry bodies such as IIA, Naredco and FICCI to provide 11 lakh jobs. Plus, there is an assortment of offers under the newly launched PM Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana and interest-free loans to run enterprises.

But all that appears to be in a flux going by snatches of conversations with these young migrants of Unnao:

Anuj Kumar (30): The food delivery man is back from Mumbai, digging pits 1,500 km away in Unnao. He earned over ₹25,000 per month until lockdown became the order of the day. Now, in his native village Kalu Khera, he works as a daily wager for the forest department and earns ₹200 a day, not guaranteed for all 30 days.

In mid-May, Anuj, along with eight others, took their four mobikes to make the 1,500-km journey. Reaching home was the happiest moment of his life. "Despite Mumbai being a costly city, I saved enough to send it home. But, here I can barely support myself," he says. CONTINUED ON: P10

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